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LETTER DATED 19 FEBRUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GERMANY TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to bring to your attention the declaration issued on 17 February 1999 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the peace efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dieter KASTRUP
Permanent Representative of Germany
to the United Nations

99-04497 (E) 190299 190299

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Annex

[Original: English and French]

Declaration issued in Brussels on 17 February 1999 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the peace efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

1. The European Union remains deeply concerned about the ongoing crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It recalls its declarations of 11, 19 and 27 August 1998 and reiterates that the current conflict can only be solved through a negotiated settlement acceptable to all Congolese that will allow the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries in the region to find peace, stability and democracy.

2. In view of some positive signals with regard to a possible signing of a ceasefire agreement the European Union is of the opinion that peace efforts should now be enhanced in order to bring about a speedy conclusion of such an agreement. The European Union welcomes President Kabila's preparedness to enter into negotiations with all parties to the conflict, including the rebel movement, and encourages him to conclude a ceasefire agreement as soon as possible. The European Union also urges all other parties involved in the conflict, both the rebel movement and external actors, to participate in a constructive manner in the ongoing peace efforts.

3. The European Union expresses once again its strong support for the regional peace initiatives undertaken among others in the framework of the Southern African Development Community and the Organization of African Unity as well as by President Chiluba. It emphasizes the need for a continuous and inclusive negotiating process and welcomes the establishing of two committees on border security issues and on a ceasefire agreement in January 1999 in this context. The European Union is supporting the regional peace efforts through the assistance of its Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Aldo Ajello, who is currently again on mission in some of the countries involved.

4. The European Union would be prepared to consider a rehabilitation programme for the Democratic Republic of the Congo in case of an effective cessation of hostilities, and internal progress on peace, democracy and respect for human rights. It welcomes the declaration by the President of the Security Council of 11 December 1998, expressing the preparedness of the Council to also consider, in the light of efforts towards peaceful resolution of the conflict, the active involvement of the United Nations to assist in the implementation of an effective ceasefire agreement and in an agreed process for a political settlement of the conflict.

5. The European Union once again reiterates its support for the principles of territorial integrity and the respect of sovereignty and security of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbouring countries. It calls for negotiations of all the parties concerned, with a view to an urgent political solution to the conflict, leading to the withdrawal of foreign troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This settlement must rest on two pillars,

addressing (1) regional security problems, by finding a mechanism that meets the legitimate security concerns of neighbouring countries, and (2) the internal situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, by initiating an all-inclusive political dialogue with the aim of establishing a democratic society in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

6. The European Union strongly condemns acts of violence perpetrated against the civilian population since the beginning of the crisis. It firmly calls on the conflict parties to respect human rights and humanitarian law. In this context the European Union hopes that the forthcoming mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo by the United Nations Special Rapporteur, Mr. Garreton, will help shed light on the consequences of the conflict on the human rights situation, and that it will contribute to enhanced cooperation between the international community and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in this field.

7. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated country Cyprus and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this declaration.